

Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program VISTA Project 2015-2016

Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona

Federal Legislative District(s): 9 & 27

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Congressional District(s): 2, 3, & 8
State Legislative District(s): 9 & 27
Service Area by County/City: Maricopa County/Phoenix and Pima County/Tucson
Project Federal Share: \$312,576
Project Local Match: \$79,464
Community Volunteers Recruited: 980
Volunteer Hours Served: 14,143
Value of Volunteer Hours: \$316,680*

*2015 Independent Sector Rate for the
 value of a volunteer hour in Arizona is \$22.37.

Community Need

Over the last five years, 16,736 refugees and eligible beneficiaries made Arizona home, including 4,005 during Federal Fiscal Year 2015.

A refugee is an individual who has fled his or her home country owing to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group and is unable or unwilling to avail him or herself of the protection of that country. Resettlement to a third country like the United States (U.S.) is the last resort among the three durable solutions recognized for refugees, and is only available when a refugee cannot voluntarily repatriate to their country of origin or integrate into the country of asylum. Of the estimated 15 million refugees in the world today, less than one percent will ever resettle in a third country; and half those currently resettle in the U.S. Asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, certain Amerasians, Afghani and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa holders, and victims of severe forms of human trafficking are also among the eligible beneficiaries for U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement assistance and services.

Arizona ranks among the top ten refugee resettlement states; and while refugees come to the U.S. with unique sets of circumstances and needs, all must strive to attain self-sufficiency as quickly as possible while

also undertaking the daunting tasks associated with transition to life in the U.S. Refugees face a wide variety of challenges in achieving self-sufficiency, such as securing affordable housing, finding and retaining employment, acquiring a new language, learning how to access medical services, and pursuing education for school aged children. VISTA assignments provide solutions to many such challenges. The Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program VISTA Project (Project) provides opportunities for refugee serving agencies in Central and Southern Arizona to develop capacity building VISTA assignments that sustain and enhance effective refugee resettlement and integration.

History and Mission

The Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP), within the Department of Economic Security, is Arizona's State Refugee Program that began as the IndoChinese Refugee Program in 1978. RRP took its present form following passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, and advances the U.S. Refugee Program purpose to assist refugees with their effective resettlement and attainment of economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after their arrival in the U.S.



Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program VISTA members provide refugees with job training and mock job interviews during the Martin Luther King day of service.

History and Mission (cont.)

Congressional passage of the Refugee Act of 1980 (Section 411. [8 U.S.C. 1521]) codified the U.S. historic policy of aiding individuals fleeing persecution from their homelands. The Refugee Act requires that all federally-funded state administered refugee resettlement assistance focus on employment-related services, English language training (ELT) and case management services. Towards this end, RRP funds a broad array of specialized linguistically compatible and culturally responsive services and coordinates public and private resources to best enable refugees and other eligible beneficiaries to be firmly established on the path to success and well-being on their journey to becoming contributing Americans.

RRP has received support from CNCS through the AmeriCorps VISTA Program since 2009.

Program Activities

RRP serves as an intermediary grant sponsor for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Through the Project, partner agencies develop assignments for capacity building programs to support refugee resettlement in the areas of employment and case management, health care and health promotion, English language training (ELT), and assignments that build linkages to related supports and benefits (e.g., childcare and transportation). VISTA assignments may also be developed to support specialized programs, such as those for older refugees and K-12 education.

Program Impact

Nearly 25,000 refugees and eligible beneficiaries have been impacted by the Project's umbrella of assignments that support refugee serving partners with building sustained capacity, expanding awareness, and engaging volunteer assistance.

Now at the beginning of its sixth year, the Project will continue to advance a broader and more comprehensive range of unduplicated assistance and services that support the overarching goals of refugees' economic self-sufficiency and successful resettlement and integration.

National Priority Areas

The Project sponsors 20 assignments through partnerships with ten refugee serving agencies in Arizona. Assignments in the Project align with the core federal and state refugee resettlement goals of economic self-sufficiency and successful resettlement, as well as with the CNCS anti-poverty goals of economic development, educational advancement, and healthy future improvement. Assignments in the Project support and expand options for employment, affordable housing, access to available resettlement services, funding development, services to older refugees, health promotion, and educational advancement programs. Assignment summaries in the Project include:

- *Public Benefit Analyst:* Increase the ease, frequency, and volume of information sharing between RRP and public benefit programs.
- *English Language Training:* Strengthen linkage among ELT, employment, and community support.
- *Education and Head Start Program:* Streamline refugee family enrollment, improve student success, and heighten parent involvement.
- *Older Refugees:* Engage with volunteer and other community support to help older refugees successfully adjust and attain U.S. Citizenship.
- *Employment:* Develop programs that improve refugees' likelihood of securing and retaining their first U.S. job or progressing in their employment.
- *East Valley Expansion:* Build on efforts to strategically expand and develop capacity for refugee resettlement in Tempe, Chandler, and Mesa.

To address the challenges refugees encounter on their resettlement, the Project assignments encourage strategic connections among partner agencies towards fostering collaboration and leveraging existing resources to help refugees attain economic self-sufficiency.

Partner Agencies

- Arizona State University
- Arizona Immigrant and Refugee Services
- Area Agency on Aging
- Catholic Charities, Community Services
- Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona
- Central Christian Church
- International Rescue Committee (Phoenix and Tucson)
- Maricopa Integrated Health Systems
- Refugee Focus (Phoenix and Tucson)
- Somali American United Council of Arizona